

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, as presently amended, and in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-4 are pending in the application; Claims 1-4 are amended by the present amendment. Support for amended Claims 1-4 can be found in the original specification, claims, and drawings.¹ Claims 1 and 2 have also been amended to avoid interpretation under 35 U.S.C. §112, sixth paragraph. Thus, no new matter is presented.

In the Outstanding Official action, Claim 1 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph for failing to have proper antecedent basis; and Claims 1-4 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as anticipated by Morse et al. (U.S. Patent 5,802,296, hereinafter "Morse").

Claim 1 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, because the Official Action asserted that the phrase "the data intact" failed to have proper antecedent basis. In response, Claim 1 has been amended to recite "data intact" instead of "the data intact." Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of Claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, be withdrawn.

In an exemplary embodiment of the present application, various avatars are filtered, or virtual user identities, in a virtual environment. This allows users to share a virtual space with other avatars, by allowing them to filter unwanted interaction from other user's avatars. The processing for filtering out unwanted avatars takes place in the users processing device (client) which is connected through a network to a server containing the avatar virtual world and corresponding user profiles. Therefore, the server maintaining the avatar virtual environment requires no modification to implement the present filtering process.

¹ Specification at Figures 2 and 11.

Amended Claim 1 recites, *inter alia*, an information processing apparatus... said information processing apparatus, comprising:

“a registering unit configured to register any of said avatars as an object to be filtered out in a predetermined storage area;
receiving unit configured to receive data corresponding to said shared virtual space from said server;
determining unit configured to determine whether said received data includes data representative of any avatar as an object to be filtered out;
a filtering unit configured to delete the data to be filtered out from said received data...”

Morse describes a virtual environment in which users with avatars can be granted supervisory powers in a profile, which enhance the user's ability to control objects in the virtual world.² With these supervisory powers, the user can force another avatar to leave a specific virtual area, mute another avatar (i.e. prevent them from sending messages), as well as perform other similar functions.³ These supervisory functions are stored and administered by the server (140). Therefore, when a user issues a command to, for example, mute a user, and then the client computer sends a message to the server which interprets the received message and updates a data structure, by muting the requested user, based on this received message.⁴

Morse teaches that supervisory avatars can cause other avatars to be muted or to exit certain virtual areas, as describe above. However, Morse describes that these settings are stored in a server device (140), and that the server data structure is updated based on messages received from various client computers.⁵ Thus, the client computers in Morse function only to send messages which alter the data structure of the server (140), and do not include a registering unit configured to register any one of the avatars as an object to be filtered out in a predetermined storage area.

² Morse at col. 2, lines 64-66.

³ Morse at col. 2, line 66-col. 3, line 4.

⁴ Morse at col. 3, lines 14-24, and col. 4, lines 9-43.

⁵ Id.

Amended Claim 1 recites a processing apparatus, which is connected via a network to a server including a virtual space, including a registering unit configured to register any one of the avatars as an object to be filtered out in a predetermined storage area. Morse fails to teach or disclose a processing apparatus connected to a server through a network which includes a registering unit configured to register any one of the avatars as an object to be filtered out, as recited in amended Claim 1.

Amended Claim 1 further recites that the processing apparatus, configured for connection via a network to a server including a virtual space, includes a determining unit configured to determine whether data received from the server includes avatar data to be filtered. As stated previously, Morse performs user muting and other similar functions by updating the data structure of the server (140). Therefore, the client computer simply receives information regarding the virtual world, and no determination unit is included which determines if any information is filtered based on information stored in a registering unit, as recited in amended Claim 1.

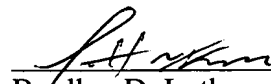
Amended Claim 1 also recites that the processing apparatus, connected via a network to a server including a virtual space, includes a filtering unit configured to delete data received, which is indicative of an avatar to be filtered out. Morse fails to describe that any filtering of information is performed whatsoever. In contrast, and as described above, the supervisory functions of a specific user are implemented by changing the data structure of the server (140). Therefore, since these changes are made in the server, no filtering of information is performed in any processing device in Morse's system.

In light of the above discussion, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of Claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b), be withdrawn. For substantially the same reasons as given with respect to amended Claim 1, it is also submitted that amended Claims 3 and 4 also patentably define over Morse.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment, and in light of the foregoing comments, it is respectfully submitted that the invention defined by Claims 1-4 patentably distinguishes over the prior art of record. The present application is therefore believed to be in condition for formal allowance and an early and favorable reconsideration of the application is therefore requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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